

TOWN OF AMHERST
Conservation Commission

April 14, 2021

APPROVED

1 In attendance via Zoom : Rob Clemens – Chair, John Harvey, Peter Lyon – BOS Ex-Officio, Lee
2 Gilman [7:45pm], Jared Hardner [7:46pm], Mike Cohen (Alternate), Vick Bennison, Rich Hart,
3 Bill Widmer (Alternate), and Bill Stoughton (Alternate).
4 Staff present: Natasha Kypfer – Town Planner, and Kristan Patenaude – Recording Secretary.

5
6 Chairman Rob Clemens called the online meeting to order at 7:02 pm, with the following
7 statement. As Chair of the Amherst Conservation Commission, I find that due to the State of
8 Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and in
9 accordance with the Governor’s Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04,
10 as extended by various Executive Orders, this public body is authorized to meet
11 electronically.

12 Please note that there is no physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously to this
13 meeting, which was authorized pursuant to the Governor’s Emergency Order.

14 However, in accordance with the Emergency Order, I am confirming that we are:

15 Providing public access to the meeting by telephone, with additional access possibilities by
16 video or other electronic means:

17 We are utilizing Zoom for this electronic meeting.

18
19 All members of the Board have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this
20 meeting through this platform, and the public has access to contemporaneously listen and, if
21 necessary, participate in this meeting through dialing the following phone #646-558-8656
22 and password 846 5631 4586, or by clicking on the following website address:
23 <https://zoom.us/j/84656314586> that was included in the public notice of this meeting.

24
25 Providing public notice of the necessary information for accessing the meeting:

26 We previously gave notice to the public of the necessary information for accessing the
27 meeting, including how to access the meeting using Zoom or telephonically. Instructions
28 have also been provided on the website of the Conservation Commission at:

29 www.amherstnh.gov.

30
31 Providing a mechanism for the public to alert the public body during the meeting if there are
32 problems with access: If anybody has a problem, please call 603-341-5290.

33
34 Adjourning the meeting if the public is unable to access the meeting:

35 In the event the public is unable to access the meeting, the meeting will be adjourned and
36 rescheduled.

37
38 Please note that all votes that are taken during this meeting shall be done by roll call vote.

39
40 Let’s start the meeting by taking a roll call attendance. When each member states their
41 presence, please also state whether there is anyone in the room with you during this meeting,
42 which is required under the Right-to- Know law.
43

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Vick Bennison, John Harvey, Mike Cohen, Rich Hart, Bill Widmer, Bill Stoughton, Rob Clemens, and Peter Lyon – all present and alone.

Bill Stoughton sat for Jared Harder, until his later arrival.

Mike Cohen sat for Frank Montesanto in his absence.

Bill Widmer sat for Lee Gilman, until his later arrival.

ADMINISTRATIVE:

1. Chair Comments – none

2. Minutes

Bill Stoughton moved to approve the meeting minutes of March 10, 2021, as submitted. Vick Bennison seconded.

Roll call: Vick Bennison – aye; Rob Clemens – aye; Mike Cohen – aye; Rich Hart – aye; John Harvey – aye; Bill Stoughton – aye; and Bill Widmer – abstain. 6-0-1; motion carried.

Bill Stoughton moved to approve the meeting minutes of March 24, 2021, as submitted. Vick Bennison seconded.

Roll call: Vick Bennison – aye; Rob Clemens – aye; Mike Cohen – aye; Rich Hart – aye; John Harvey – aye; Bill Stoughton – aye; and Bill Widmer – abstain. 6-0-1; motion carried.

3. Treasurer's Report

Bill Widmer reviewed the Treasurer's Report. He stated that the group has approximately \$5,500 left to spend before the end of the fiscal year. He noted that the recent LUCT payments are still pending and will bring the Conservation Fund up to approximately \$400,000. The anticipated funds from the golf cart sales and other assets from Buck Meadow have also not hit the accounts yet.

Vick Bennison explained that he could use some funds for signage, such as No Motor Vehicle signs. He will bring forth a proposal for this at the next meeting.

Mike Cohen explained that he is hoping to begin an environmental curriculum for local kindergartners and 1st graders. He and Kristan Patenaude have been in contact with one teacher who is interested so far. There will be funds needed for this, but the cost is yet known.

John Harvey made a presentation to the group regarding purchasing uniform polo/t-shirts for Commissioners to wear during events or outings. The high-end estimate for this project is \$520.

John Harvey moved to expend up to \$550 for custom ACC polo or t-shirts from the Public Outreach budget line.

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Discussion:

Bill Stoughton noted that he has an objection to using taxpayer dollars for this item. If Commissioners want a custom shirt, he suggested that it be funded by the members themselves.

Rob Clemens explained that the ACC purchased custom hats a few years ago with ACC funds, as an example.

Mike Cohen noted that he has worked for several non-profits that have used public funds to purchase similar uniform items.

Rob Clemens explained that he has suggested ACC business cards to hand out to people in the past.

Rich Hart asked about similar custom shirts for trail stewards.

Bill Stoughton asked if other Commissions/groups in Town use town funds on similar items. He reiterated that he believes it a better practice for members to pay for items like this themselves.

Peter Lyon stated that he is unaware of other groups in Town that have used town funds for similar items. However, it is not illegal nor prohibited by Town policy. He agrees that a better course would be for members to purchase shirts for themselves, if they so choose.

Rob Clemens agreed.

Roll call: Vick Bennison – aye; Rob Clemens – nay; Mike Cohen – aye; Rich Hart – nay; John Harvey – aye; Bill Stoughton – nay; and Bill Widmer – nay. 3-4-0; motion failed.

Rich Hart suggested that public funds could be used for the one-time fee to create an embroidered logo for the shirts. Each member could then purchase his/her own shirt.

John Harvey moved to expend up to \$50 to establish the ACC logo artwork so that members can purchase shirts on their own. Vick Bennison seconded.

Discussion:

Mike Cohen stated that he does not understand supporting this motion, if the previous motion was not supported, as these funds are still taxpayer dollars.

Bill Stoughton noted that, if this motion fails, he will donate the \$50 for this item.

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Roll call: Vick Bennison – aye; Rob Clemens – aye; Mike Cohen – aye; Rich Hart – aye; John Harvey – nay; Bill Stoughton – nay; and Bill Widmer – aye. 5-2-0; motion carried.

John Harvey questioned why the signage for the Boston Post Road canoe port landing is not similar to the other canoe port in Town. He believes it would give a more professional appearance for the Boston Post Road canoe port landing signage to match. He also explained that, if the Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee's Warrant Article passes, the canoe port parking lot might be slightly updated with a trail running from it to the path.

John Harvey moved to expend up to \$350 for signage and posts to be placed at the Boston Post Road canoe port from the Signage budget line. Mike Cohen seconded.

Discussion:

Rob Clemens noted that the previous signs at this canoe port have been vandalized.

Roll call: Vick Bennison – aye; Rob Clemens – aye; Mike Cohen – aye; Rich Hart – aye; John Harvey – aye; Bill Stoughton – aye; and Bill Widmer – aye. 7-0-0; motion carried unanimously.

In response to a question from Peter Lyon, Rob Clemens explained that one sign at that location was vandalized and ruined. It was suggested that the group should look into how to make sure that doesn't happen again in the future.

John Harvey explained that he, Mike Cohen, and Kristan Patenaude worked on habitat signs for Buck Meadow in the fall time. He would like to have 4 of those signs printed and posted.

John Harvey moved to expend up to \$200 for habitat signs to be posted at Buck Meadow from the Signage budget line. Vick Bennison seconded.

Roll call: Vick Bennison – aye; Rob Clemens – aye; Mike Cohen – aye; Rich Hart – aye; John Harvey – aye; Bill Stoughton – aye; and Bill Widmer – aye. 7-0-0; motion carried unanimously.

Bill Widmer noted that Town Wide Clean-up Day has been scheduled for May 15, 2021. There will be two drop-off sites: one located at the entrance to the High School, and the other located on the Town Green. He is still in discussions with Mike Berry at the High School, regarding prizes for high school students who participate.

Bill Widmer exited the meeting at 7:44pm.

Lee Gilman entered the meeting at 7:45pm and took his seat on the Commission.

4. Planning & Permitting

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Bill Stoughton stated that the Planning Board denied the Carlson Manor application last week. The application was denied for two main reasons: 1) the manner of the age-restriction implementation proposed; 2) concern regarding the proposal's impact to the Town's rural aesthetic. He noted that the Planning Board also heard a wetlands CUP for a proposed driveway and garage that would encroach on a buffer. This application will be coming back before the Board next week due to concerns from the Board members.

Jared Hardner entered the meeting at 7:46pm and took his seat on the Commission.

a. Wetlands CUP for 124 Baboosic Lake Rd. - Tom Carr, Meridian

Tom Carr, Meridian Land Services, joined the Commission. Tom Carr explained that this application is for a small existing lot on Baboosic Lake. The property owner would like to add a garage on this lot. The lot predates current zoning ordinances. The applicant has already been before the Zoning Board of Adjustment for approval for sideline setback encroachment and floor area ratio items and received approval for both. The existing gravel driveway on the west side of the property toward the lakeside portion of the house is proposed to have all gravel removed and be replanted with grass. There is also an infiltration trench proposed from the existing structure along the drip edge.

Tom Carr explained that there is an existing upper deck over a lower deck on the property, which is all considered impervious surface. These decks, including the patio deck will remain. There is an existing stone walkway on the northeast corner of the house. There is not an infiltration trench proposed at this portion of the site. There is also an existing storage shed that will remain. A new septic system is proposed as part of this project; this will be a pretreatment system with concrete chambers and will be moved farther away from the Lake.

Tom Carr noted that the plan shows a listing of the impervious areas on site. There is proposed to be an overall decrease in impervious surfaces from 46% to 41%. There are also erosion control notes included in the plan. The existing home has a two-pitch roof, and the proposed garage is planned to have the same type of roof. The new stormwater system will be 75' from the Lake. There are no proposed impacts to the onsite trees. There is one bedroom proposed above the new garage. There is an agreement with the abutter, and the Amherst Land Trust that owns an easement on the abutting land, regarding a septic loading easement. A stormwater management report has been submitted by Doug Brodeur, Meridian Land Services.

Bill Stoughton noted that, as the ACC representative to the Planning Board, he limits his comments in this forum regarding this application and will not form opinions or comment on the merits of the application until it is heard by the Planning Board. He explained that the proposed drop edge infiltration trench has a high pollutant removal because the stormwater is only coming from the roof. However, the BMPs (best management practice) for drip edge systems, per the State Stormwater Manual, note that this system is only good for 55% nitrogen removal. The Town's regulations require 60% nitrogen removal. He asked how the stormwater report claims to reconcile this issue.

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Tom Carr explained that Doug Brodeur should be present at the Planning Board meeting for this item and will hopefully be able to address it.

In response to a question from Rob Clemens, Tom Carr explained that a test pit dug on site showed well-draining Canton soils of moderate permeability. There is a deep-water table in this area and Tom Carr noted that the stormwater system should easily handle a 50-year storm event.

In response to a question from Rob Clemens, Tom Carr stated that the existing septic tank will be excavated and removed. The existing leach field will remain in place, or be removed, if necessary.

Rob Clemens noted that the Commission will send its comments on this application to the Planning Board for review.

TOPICS

5. Buck Meadow Monitoring Plan – John Harvey

a. Vernal Pool Workshop – May 7th

b. Bird Walks – May 15th

John Harvey explained that he, Vick Bennison and Rob Clemens have been attending classes through the UNH Extension to understand how natural events could be handled by the Town. He will be presenting to Taking Action for Wildlife and other local commissions on this topic. The goal of this plan is to protect/preserve open space, monitor and promote wildlife habitats, help meet the recreational needs of the Town, and engage the public in conservation activities. Buck Meadow will be used as a demo area for this plan.

John Harvey noted that there will be a guided bird walk at Buck Meadow on May 15, 2021, and upcoming vernal pool and tree/shrub identification events. The current monitoring plan will be followed for three years. The intent is for a small group of volunteers to check-up on Buck Meadow in regard to this plan approximately once a month.

In response to a question from Rich Hart, Rob Clemens explained that he has spoken with the Garden Club regarding monitoring and identifying possible species to introduce into the pollinator garden. The Club has some general interest in this topic.

The Commission discussed how best to manage purple swallowwort at Buck Meadow.

In response to a question from Rob Clemens, Jared Hardner noted that there have been 25 page views for the Bird Walk Workshop, but no sign-ups yet.

6. Other Business

The Commission discussed the possibility of using trail cameras to monitor vandalism or general misuse of trail parking area. Rob Clemens noted that an abutter of the Patch Hill trails is

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concerned with litter in the area. Jared Hardner explained that the Commission added signage to the Patch Hill parking lot about a year ago that was removed.

Lee Gilman suggested that a deterrent might be signage that states there are trail cameras, without cameras actually being installed.

Jared Hardner explained that other towns have used real cameras pointed towards fake cameras to monitor vandalism of the cameras. Jared Hardner also noted that he doesn't believe the ACC wants to be in the business of policing. He suggested that information on vandalism or littering should be passed along to the Police Department.

The Commission discussed that the Patch Hill abutter owns either most or all of the parking area that is being misused. Rob Clemens explained that a survey might be needed to clarify the boundaries of this parking area and to create an agreement with the abutter for it. He agreed to pass along information on possible vandalism and misuse to the Police Department. He also suggested that a group clean up the Patch Hill parking area for Clean-up Day.

John Harvey reviewed possible steps to clean up the Wheeler property, adjacent to Pond Parish. He suggested that the Commission could attempt this project this summer, as the area would be a good wildlife habitat attribute for the Town. He suggested there be a volunteer project manager for this. Jared Hardner noted that a shelterwood harvest is proposed for this area once it is cleaned up.

In response to a question from Rich Hart, Rob Clemens suggested that the Recreation Department be contacted in regard to a triangular area of land at Lindabury Orchard that does not appear to be getting mowed.

The Commission discussed possible invasive treatments at Lindabury Orchard. The group agreed to discuss this further with Frank Montesanto.

Bill Stoughton stated that he and John Harvey will be presenting to the Board of Selectmen on Monday night regarding suggestions for discretionary easements. Rob Clemens noted that there will also be a public hearing at that meeting for Warrant Article 22. Peter Lyon explained that bond counsel suggested that the Town should redo this public hearing in order to comply with state statute.

Rob Clemens stated that the next ACC meeting will be held on April 28, 2021.

Vick Bennison moved to adjourn at 9:10pm.

*Respectfully submitted,
Kristan Patenaude*

Minutes approved as amended: May 12, 2021